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SCHOOL DAYS By DWIG



When A Girl Marries

By ANNE LITTLE
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"Let me call your number for you," requested Miss May with her modest insistence on the fact that, though I call her partner, she came originally into my office as secretary and assistant.

"Not me!" laughed Mr. Lacy ungrammatically and heartily. "My only living relative is going to be spoiled like a baby and waited on like a queen. So she will kindly sit still and yet Ralph do it."

With gay camaraderie we turned to make ready for our excursion out to dine, while Mr. Lacy sat down at the telephone. There was a murmur of conversation to which I paid no attention, and then I heard Mr. Lacy calling gaily:

"I got Park and he likes it fine. He'll meet us at my favorite eatery—say, by jingo! I ought to have asked you folks where you wanted to go instead of railroaded things through like the social club dub I am. I'm sorry. But I was so blooming keen for giving Park a chance to get in with worth-while folks that I didn't think a step beyond that. Forgive me?"

Even as I was explaining and insisting that there was nothing to forgive the telephone rang and Mr. Lacy picked up the receiver he had just put down.

"For you—Mrs. Harrison," he announced after a moment. "I said into the place he had vacated for me and said idly:

"Mrs. Harrison speaking. Who is this, please?"

"Hello, Anne! It's Tom Mason," came the response of the last voice I'd dreamed of hearing. "I've got to consult you—and at once. Be right down. So long till I see you."

And the receiver slammed up on the hook with a peremptory click.

Even if I had wanted to refuse Tom, I had no way of reaching him. I hadn't the slightest idea where his call came from.

CHAPTER 657.

As I turned from my brief and one-sided telephone conversation with Tom Mason, I realized that it wasn't going to be a pleasant task to inform Miss May and Mr. Lacy that I could not dine with them. But I took the plunge at once.

"That was Mr. Mason," one of my husband's oldest friends, I explained. "He's been out of town performing a very great service for us. I didn't know he had returned till I heard his voice just now. He coolly announced that he must see at once and would be right down. Then he rang off. So I guess we may safely assume that that's that."

"Oh, I see," said Mr. Lacy. "All dine together?" asked Mr. Lacy.

"Mr. Mason was very urgent," I explained at a loss to make the matter sound as imperative as I felt it to be.

"Of course," said Mr. Lacy quietly after an instant. "We'll run right along and meet Park. And Mrs. Harrison—don't think me intrusive or impudent for adding this. But if circumstances lead you to have your dinner with this old friend of your family, don't imagine I'll be fool enough to take offence or feel miffed or anything like that. I hope I'm not talking like a fresh-country bumpkin."

"You're talking like a dear," announced Miss May with astonishing assurance. "Mrs. Harrison understands perfectly that you're releasing her without the slightest thought of misunderstanding. And I don't see why we should risk her not having dinner at all for fear of hurting our feelings. So it's just as well to have everything settled before we go."

"Nice people!" I cried. "I might have been silly enough to starve to death if you hadn't given me permission to have a sandwich, and glass of milk with Tom Mason."

My bantering tone sent them off satisfied. But I couldn't help feeling worried. Tom's tone had carried some hint of agitation. Nervously going over the possibilities of the situation, I paced up and down the office waiting for him. Finally he burst into the office looking so agitated that I could scarcely believe this was the suave and imperturbable Tom Mason. Without a preliminary word of greeting he demanded:

"Where's Daisy? Have you any idea?"

"Daisy?" I repeated stupidly.

"What's the matter with her?"

"I don't know," replied Tom grimly. "That's what I'm asking you—where's Daisy? I don't stand staring at me as if you think I'm crazy. Tell me what you know about the—poor kid."

"Why, Tom," I answered slowly, "you're sweeping me from my bearings. You sound so mysterious. I thought you'd know where she was. They thought so at the office."

"So you did miss her!" cried Tom in a tone I couldn't fathom. "She didn't slip out—unnoticed. The poor little thing isn't friendless."

"Of course not," I said. "You couldn't think that. I tried to locate her almost a week ago and they seemed to think down at your office that you'd sent her instructions to go off on a buying trip. Recently you didn't. That leaves us ready to start off from the beginning if we're going to figure—"

"When did you see her last?" interrupted Tom.

"About two weeks ago. I suppose I'm not so sure of that, as I am of the first time I missed her," I answered, interesting myself to ask.

"But why are we standing here staring at each other like two wild people? There's nothing like the matter. Why should we act as if there were?"

"Let's not bluff ourselves or each other," replied Tom curtly. "This is ugly. The studio is locked and silent. They don't know a thing about her at her boarding house. Mrs. Hill is in the dark. The poor kid die hasn't any friends. At least none that I know of. There isn't any place to turn or anything to do but inform the police."

"Oh, Tom, I wouldn't do that!" I cried. "Betty Brice was out of reach once for a while, and it wasn't anything."

Even as it slipped out I was conscious that I had given Betty the name that was hers before her marriage to poor Terry.

(To Be Continued)

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